

How Do You Keep Your Life in Balance?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, September 12, 2010
Exodus 20:1-11

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work” (Exodus 20:8-9—NASB-U).

“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work” (Exodus 20:8-9—NRSV).

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Exodus 20:8-9—KJV).

For our personal benefit, God commands us to both labor and rest; each activity requires the other, when one starts the other stops. Because we need mental, physical, and spiritual relief from our labors, Jesus declared that God made the Sabbath for us (Mark 2:27-28).

God commands us to labor, because everyone needs the fruits of labor (their own labor or another’s labor) to live. Paul wrote, “we gave you this command: anyone unwilling to work should not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The key word in the command is “unwilling.” Why should those “willing to work” put forth their labor for those “unwilling to work”? Some are “unable to work” at any job, and believers must struggle against those in our society that would starve such people to death. The Bible explicitly commands believers “to care for orphans and widows in their distress,” and we might add the underemployed (James 1:27). Fortunately, we have assistance programs, the church, and volunteer agencies to help those unable to work and those willing but unable to work. For the unemployed or retired, looking for work or going to school or doing some volunteer work can be appropriate labor. Whatever we do, we should all learn to pray as Jesus taught, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11).

Worship on the Sabbath can provide encouragement from God's word, spiritual nourishment, prayer support, and clarity of thought to prepare us for the labor and week ahead. The Bible reveals the value of labor and rest, and teaches us to maintain the proper balance between the two: six days of labor and one day of rest.

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Questions for Further Thought

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1. What is the difference between being “unwilling to work” and “unable to work”? How should people respond to those “unwilling to work”? Who are those “unable to work”? In what ways can we care for those unable to work?

2. Some are unable to perform physical labor. What types of spiritual labor might you encourage them to perform? How might they receive care and/or payment for their spiritual labor?

3. What are some ways that each of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20: 1-17) benefit those who obey them? In what ways might society benefit from everyone obeying the Ten Commandments?

4. Why do some not want the Ten Commandments posted on public property? How might posting them benefit the public? Do you agree or disagree with the Ten Commandments being posted on public property? What does “public property” mean? Who owns the “public property”? How might legal judgments against posting the Ten Commandments be overturned, if you think they should be overturned?

5. In what ways, in addition to cursing, is God's name misused today? What might you say to someone who is misusing God's name? What idol might the person who misuses God's name be worshiping? How might you draw this problem to their attention?